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ABSTRACT

West Virginia's philosophy toward equality of opportunity differed from that of southern states. Gender roles in West Virginia were unique to Scottish and Irish settlers; men were warriors and women did such heavy work as clearing fields, slaughtering, and cutting forests. Early settlers in other southern states such as Virginia were from southern England, where the role of women was as property of males. Many institutions of learning were established in West Virginia to ensure universal opportunity. Some were coed and some were separate opportunities, but total lack of opportunities became rare by the early 19th century. Many of these institutions were owned and operated by women. Uniformity of opportunity was more apparent after West Virginia attained statehood in 1863. The emphasis on education and equality also led to opportunity for people of color. Some schools integrated long before the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Topeka, Kansas decision. There were three colleges for African Americans in West Virginia in the 19th century, and there were two high schools for African Americans in an era when high school education was relatively rare. The high school in Parkersburg was one of two south of the Mason-Dixon Line that had a black principal. After education came under the control of coal companies and out-of-state capitalists, education came to reflect the patriarchal attitudes of major out-of-state exploiters of West Virginia resources. (TD)

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No Need to Study for Your Social Class - - Education and Gender in West Virginia

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Abstract

West Virginia's philosophy toward equality of opportunity clearly distinguished it from southern states. Education of women was a key component of the opposition to southern "aristocratic values". Educational options both reflected and defined changing needs and approaches to gender in West Virginia.

This paper challenges traditional Appalachian stereotypes of sex roles through discussion of educational facilities in the 19th Century including seminaries, academies, graded schools, vocational training, normal schools, business schools, finishing schools and colleges.

Introduction

The paradigm of woman as subordinate is challenged in this paper. My thesis is that study of female education in West Virginia supports the idea that women did not hold a subordinate role. A second point is that social class was generally not a factor in education – the goal was to make it available to as many people as possible.

Gender roles in West Virginia are unique to Scot and Irish settlers. Early settlers brought gender roles brought from North Briton where, when needed, men were warriors (active in America fighting Indians, bandits, regulators, weak government, and wars) while women were workers who did heavy work in clearing fields, slaughtering, cutting forests, and ground breaking. Clues to the divide between West Virginians and other southern states such as Virginia can be found in Fisher's description of the history of early settlers in the South as immigrants from Southern England with different gender roles. He states that the traditions those settlers brought from Southern England saw women as property of males. Accordingly, women in West Virginia would have been seen as instrumental for survival while plantation wives would be seen as ornaments (Fisher 1989).

Charges of inequality by modern retrospects of education ignore the fact that education was a private and community endeavor that reflected the resources and needs at the time. The primary concern of early settlers was, by necessity, survival through efficient use of resources. Education was seen as necessary for the development of "good Christian citizens". (Ambler, 1951) Settlers of western Virginia (West Virginia) established schools for everyone, unlike the plantation schools which educated white male children of plantation owners and wealthy farmers to prepare them for study at major universities or in Europe. Funding for the University of Virginia rather than a good public education system was a real sore point for families in western Virginia and offers of scholarships to the University of Virginia were often refused. An article published in the Wheeling Argasy on April 17, 1846 stated "The legislature of Virginia has refused the Academy the loan of a few dollars, while the University of Virginia, where

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insurrections, murders, and rows have disgraced the commonwealth, has defrauded the common schools, academies, and colleges out of $15,000 a year." (Ambler, 1951, p. 111).

Challenges

The primary challenges faced by early schools were financial and the need for qualified teachers. Schools were funded by tuition, religious groups, lotteries, sale of stock in the school, money from legislatures, lyceums, the Freedman's Bureau, and private funds. Some schools were operated out of commitment to education rather than fiscal concern. For example Liberty College was originally an elementary school operated by a teacher who mended shoes to earn a living and taught school for his board. Marcellus Marshall, an early president of Glenville State College, performed both custodial 2duties and mined coal to carry to school for to provide heat for students. Glenville State did not require students to pay tuition for normal school training (Holt & Wells, 1997).

In the face of funding problems, it was difficult to recruit qualified teachers. Normal schools were formed in effort to alleviate the obstacle of teacher shortage and lack of funds to attract them. These institutions, dedicated to training teachers, were based on a European philosophy that effective teaching was based on professional training and not on natural ability alone. The normal schools both trained teachers and offered education through schools that served as "laboratories" for teachers in training (Boughter, 1929; Harper, 1939).

Types of Schools

Education was generally classical, general, business, or technical. Schools of higher education were called colleges, academies, seminaries, business colleges, or institutes. In the late 19th century schools began offering graded instruction with advancements by years rather than levels. These institutions were called graded schools and later grade schools.

Classical education included instruction in Latin or Greek as well as literature, rhetoric, philosophy, math and science. Academies offered English, surveying, geography, history, and arithmetic. Romney Academy and Mercer Academy also had legal departments. Normal schools offered teacher training. Agriculture and Mechanical Colleges were authorized for each state to emphasize the importance of agriculture and invention. West Virginia was one of two states to provide its own land for the colleges as the federal government did not own land in the state. The first was established on the site of a former girl's school in Morgantown. The second was built in 1890 with funds authorized by the Second Morrill Act. It provided education for Blacks on land donated in Institute WV and it had six departments: normal, agricultural, mechanical, commercial, domestic arts, and music (Ambler, 1951).

Contextual Framework

Nationally, there were not many opportunities for women. Salem Academy in North Carolina was founded in 1772, Wesleyan College granted first degrees to women in 1836. Mount Holyoke Academy was founded in 1837. Oberlin in Ohio admitted four women in 1837 and is

generally credited for being the first in the nation to admit women for coed instruction. (www.womenscolleges.org/history.htm)

State normal schools dedicated to training teachers first appeared in 1823. By 1875 there were state sponsored normal schools in 25 states from Main to California. Only New York and Pennsylvania had more than West Virginia (New York had 8, Pennsylvania had 10, while Massachusetts and West Virginia each had six. In addition to the state normal schools, West Virginia had several privately owned normal schools (Harper, 1939; Humphreys, 1923).

Educational Opportunities

According to Charles Ambler (1951), education was either coed or opportunities for females were offered at nearby institutions. This section will outline only a few of the earliest schools in order to make apparent the range of opportunities offered for women. Except where otherwise noted, the source for this information is Amber's History of Education in West Virginia.

Sherpherd's Town (now Shepherdstown) Academy opened in 1832 in cooperation with a girl's school, the Shepherdstown Female Classical School. In addition to the classical school education, females were given instruction in French, Italian, and Spanish as well as drawing, painting, music, and needlework. By 1877 males could earn the degree of Master of English Literature while females could earn the degree of Mistress of English Literature. Females joined the Parthenian literary society while males joined the Ciceronian literary societies (Slonaker, 1958).

The Charlestown Academy was established in 1795 and in 1836 offered a Female Department in a separate building. In addition to the "usual branches of English Education", students in the Female Department learned music, drawing, and painting. The Academy operated in cooperation with a lyceum. These schools eventually merged with the public schools in 1910.

West Liberty Academy opened as a coed institution in 1837 but instruction was separate.

Brooke Academy opened in 1798 and opened a separate female seminary in 1852 and later became Greenbrier College.

Marshall Academy opened in 1838 to train young male teachers and had a series of changes including use as a federal hospital and private home 18661-65 and purchase by Mrs. Salina Wallace for provision of private lessons. In 1867 it opened as a coed institution with two literary societies, Erosophian for men and Hyperiod for women. These merged to become the Virginian literary group in 1896 (Eldridge, 1996; Wallace, 1935).

Lewisberg Academy opened in 1812 and was given to the Lewisberg Female institute in 1874.

Martinsberg had many facilities. In 1829 Mrs. Ann Little opened a Seminary for Young Ladies that offered instruction including painting with watercolor on velvet. In 1830 Catherine Webber opened the Martinsburg Seminary for Young Girls, in which she taught "all the branches appertaining to an English Education. Basically this was needlework, embroidering, and painting. The dancing school opened in 1813. In 1827 Miss M. Sturn opened the Lace School to teach the art of making Bobinet Lace and Trimming Lace. In 1825 a school opened for males that provided educational certification through exams. A female equivalent was opened in 1828. Other schools included Rock Hill School opened in 1828 to offer branches of English and polite literature, Frederica Schwartz's Sewing School was founded in 1834, George M. Wilson's Night School opened in 1837, a Seminary for Young Ladies opened in 1837, a catholic school operated by the Sistrs of Charity was founded in 1845 as the Female Seminary, Mary Susan Little's Schoool opened in 1846, a Classica l School in 1847, Berkley Seminary in 1849, Mrs Moore's School in 1850, Norbonne Hall in 1851, Mrs. C. S. Armstrong's School for Girls in 1852, and Valley Institute in 1853.

The Morgantown Female Academy was chartered in 1830 on the site of a boy's academy. This was enlarged and renamed the Whitehall Female Seminary in 1843. In 1860 the name was changed to the Morgantown Female Collegiate Institute by act of the general assembly. In 1869, Mrs. James R. Moore purchased it and changed the name to the Morgantown Female Academy. The Presbyterians opened the Woodburn Female Seminary in 1858 and operated it until 1866 when it was acquired by the Monongalia Academy, a private men's school and was subsequently offered to the state of West Virginia for conversion to a land-grant educational institution to be called the Agricultural College of West Virginia. Women from the Morgantown Female Seminary were allowed to take courses at this land grant college - later West Virginia University - if they were not offered at the Female Seminary. Debate about whether or not WVU should be coed ended in 1889 when the Morgantown Female Seminary was destroyed by fire "of mysterious origin" (Ambler, 1951).

Discussion and Summary

Many institutions of learning were established in West Virginia to assure universal opportunity. Ambler (1951) states that some of the colleges were perhaps equal to William and Mary while others were little more than high schools. Sometimes urban white males got better opportunities than women or men of color or rural residents. However, being white, male, and urban did not automatically give access to the best educational opportunities in the area and being nonwhite, female or rural did not necessarily exclude opportunity for education. Communities did the best they could given the parameters of limited models and resources.

Although this paper cites many examples of separate opportunities for males and females, many institutions were either coed or there were separate opportunities but total lack of opportunities became rare by the early 19th century. West Virginia institutions offered education that provided a range of opportunity for practical, domestic, and intellectual development. West Virginia attained statehood June 20, 1863. Evidence of opportunity predated this but uniformity of opportunity is more apparent after this date. Education of women was popular in West Virginia before this was a common practice in many parts of the United States. In addition to opportunities as students, many of these institutions were owned and operated by women and

provided opportunity for both entrepreneurial and administrative positions. These women served as role models for their students in many ways.

This paper fails to address the interaction of race and gender on opportunity. It is easy to assume that the emphasis on education and equality led to an abundance of opportunity for people of color. We know, however, that segregation was mandated by law as a compromise to the counties closest to Virginia. Despite this, there are reports of some schools integrating long before the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Topeka Kansas. Perhaps the historical hardships of coal camps and the multiple ethnic groups recruited by coal mines obscured racial distinction. We know that there were three colleges for African Americans in West Virginia in the 19th Century and each had normal school departments. There were two high schools for African Americans in an era when high school education was relatively rare. The high school in Parkersburg was one of two south of the Mason-Dixon Line that had a black principal. However, W. E. B. DuBois cautioned that there is a double consciousness in that people of color experience two levels of existence and negotiate both. Patricia Hill-Collins emphasizes a matrix of domination including race, class, and gender. This issue deserves more attention than possible within the scope of this paper.

This paper also does not address the changes that might have taken place after education came under the control of coal companies and universities under the control of out-of-state capitalists. Patriarchy reflected in images about West Virginia might actually mirror the patriarchy of major out-of-state exploiters of West Virginia resources. There is evidence that the conflict analysis of education is correct in that the coal camp era was marked by poor school systems that supported ideologies of inequality and a general devaluation of education.

However, the basic ideals of equality before corruption of the interests of the elite cannot be denied. Dr. Alexander Martin, West Virginia's University argued for inclusion of women at the university and complained that the Board of Regents denied half the population the opportunity to attend the university "for no apparent reason" (Ambler, 1951). This does not diminish the daily struggles of the first women enrolled in a previously all male institution but underscores the fact that prejudice was not endemic in the state.

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